

Honourable Minister  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me first say how pleased I am to be here in Seychelles and to present on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States some brief remarks on the preparatory process for the review of the Barbados Program of Action. I would like to thank the Indian Ocean Commission for organizing this meeting and I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Seychelles for being our kind host. Indeed we are enjoying the very warm hospitality which is typical of the island traditions.

This meeting comes at a very significant stage of the preparations for the review process and for the AIMS region this meeting represents a very important step in coordinating our region's position in the development of a strategy for the further implementation of the Barbados Program of Action. In that regard, it is my expectation that this meeting will deliver some significant input to the Inter-Regional Meeting of all SIDS in Bahamas at the end of this month

As you know, preparatory meetings at the regional levels have now been completed and their reports have been circulated as official documents of the UN system. In all the meetings, great emphasis has been placed on the role of regional institutions as promoters, coordinators and executors of strategies, projects and programs. Indeed the BPOA itself underscores the need for action at regional level together with action at national and

international levels. In that context, regional institutions have been requested to prepare regional synthesis reports to help develop the SIDS' strategy. The recently held IGO technical meeting in New York further highlighted the role of the regional institutions in the BPOA process.

The absence of an appropriate regional institution in any region is therefore bound to have consequences in the overall performance of that region. In this regard the AIMS region is particularly disadvantaged since the only organization in the region, namely the Indian Ocean Commission has only three of the AIMS SIDS as Members. There are no doubt other organizations in the AIMS region, but none of them covers in a formal manner all SIDS of our region or deals with BPOA issues in a dedicated manner. It is against this backdrop that the Cape Verde meeting agreed on the need for us to give some serious thought to the creation of an appropriate mechanism for the region and mandated the Indian Ocean Commission to act as interim coordinator until the International Meeting in Mauritius in August this year. The meeting also agreed that the Commission de l'Océan Indien would coordinate the elaboration of a regional position of the AIMS group and in that regard it recognized the value of convening a workshop to develop that regional position.

Meanwhile I am pleased to note that some work is being done to identify the existing capacities in the region and on the kind of mechanism that would be necessary to serve the region in the long term. Such mechanism will only become a reality through hard work and perseverance.

The challenge for this meeting would therefore be to assist the COI in implementing the Cape Verde mandate and in particular in developing the synthesis report outlining the issues of concerns for the SIDS of the AIMS region. It would also be important for this meeting to elaborate a strategy for continuous coordination throughout the period leading up to the International Meeting.

A close analysis of the reports of the three regional meetings shows a remarkable consensus on the major issues. All the BPOA chapters have been carefully considered and a number of forward-looking proposals are germinating. At the Bahamas inter-regional meeting later this month we will have further discussions, and decide on a set of proposals for inclusion in a proposed new Strategy for further implementation of the BPOA.

Apart from the sectoral and chapter related proposals, on which there is, among all SIDS, wide consensus on action that needs to be taken in order to further implement the BPOA and build resilience, a number of new and emerging issues have come up during the regional meetings. I am pleased to note that this meeting will consider these issues and agree on a common regional position on each of them. Let me touch upon them briefly.

1.) **Governance**

Good governance is being increasingly seen as an important and determining factor in the promotion of Peace and Development. Political stability, rule of law, adherence to democratic principles, respect for human

rights, gender equality, including the right to development and market oriented policies are the very basic ingredients of good governance.

SIDS will find it much easier to have access to international assistance and attract direct financial investments where there is greater demonstration of these principles being applied. In that regard this meeting could identify measures which SIDS can take with the assistance of the International Community to promote good governance through the development of sound economic policies responsive to the needs of the people and the setting up of suitable infrastructure as the basis for sustained economic growth, in order to eradicate poverty and create employment.

## 2.) **Security**

The notion of security has taken a new dimension since the events of September 11 2001. Most of the islands have always had a rather carefree and relaxed view of life which will forcibly need to change. Resolution 1373 of the Security Council imposes heavy responsibilities on all States in the fight against terrorism and as terrorists look for new and safe havens, SIDS which are archipelagic formations have the potential of being severely affected by such situations as well as problems of money laundering, transnational organized crimes and illegal trade in wild life. On the other hand we need to bear in mind also events such as those which took place in Solomon Islands last year. Security must therefore be seen in terms of the above perspectives as well as in terms of food and water security.

## 3.) **Trade and Investment**

The challenges for SIDS posed by globalization and trade liberalization have been highlighted at all the preparatory meetings. While the issue of trade per se needs to be addressed in the appropriate forum, it is important for SIDS to reach a consensus on a common strategy to collectively address the issue so that SIDS can obtain the most favorable terms based on their specificities, their vulnerability, and their dependence on a narrow range of products. In this regard the meeting could consider, inter alia, the most effective strategy to obtain special and differential treatment for SIDS including market access and product oriented special arrangements and to ensure that SIDS increase their capacity of representation in the various trade negotiations. The Caribbean Regional meeting discussed these issues in greater detail and this meeting can inspire itself with those recommendations.

#### 4.) **Health**

Increasing incidence of health issues such as HIV/AIDS, SARS, tuberculosis, diabetes, drug resistant malarial strains, dengue, nutritional disorders and non-communicable diseases and their impact on sustainable development are becoming matters of great concern in SIDS.

These diseases will continue to have a significant impact on the health of SIDS communities and on the economic sectors such as tourism for the foreseeable future. Further, the experience of many regions has shown that failure to effectively control diseases such as HIV/AIDS will have substantial negative impacts on future sustainable development in all SIDS.

The AIMS region is luckily so far not seriously affected by this pandemic but it is certainly not immune to it. It is therefore important for the region to be alert and in that regard it should elaborate a appropriate strategy which would not only monitor the spread of the disease but respond rapidly and effectively to outbreaks in any of the AIMS SIDS.

Other new and emerging issues which this meeting can address relate to culture and cultural industries of SIDS, the necessity of having an enabling environment at national level, the need to invest in capacity building that lasts, the optimum utilization of financial resources at national level, encouraging partnerships particularly type II initiatives and SIDS/SIDS cooperation, finding more efficient and more economical ways to report on progress in the context of International Agreements such as the JPOI and the various Environment Conventions and regarding the MDG's.

Another extremely important issue which is of special concern to some countries in this region is the question of graduation from LDC status, an issue which was extensively discussed at the Cape Verde meeting. This matter can perhaps be further elaborated at this meeting in order to ensure that due importance is given to it at the inter regional meeting in Bahamas and eventually at the International Meeting.

The participation of youth, NGO's, civil society and representatives of the business sector in the review process remains of paramount importance. I am pleased that some NGO's are present here and that there will be further discussions to prepare for the youth Forum.

As you can see these are some fairly extensive new issues, that also capture some of the lessons learned from the review process so far, such as the urgent need for capacity building at all levels in SIDS.

As I mentioned at the beginning, we will at this meeting have to give serious consideration to our input to the inter-regional meeting. The meeting may wish to consider them in detail, and also see whether there are new issues from the Cape Verde meeting that have not been adequately captured. We can then give consideration to our strategic longer term proposal for regional cooperation for the AIMS SIDS.

Finally, I want to repeat what I have stated on many previous occasions, that we need to discuss how we can use the process to raise the profile of the International Meeting, and of the Barbados Program of Action itself. We must show how we can link the Millennium Development Goals with our sustainable development, and use the Barbados Program of Action as our main tool for attracting technical and financial support for our sustainable development projects and programs. This will entail a significant awareness raising about sustainable development and the Barbados Program of Action, and this needs to take place at the national and local levels in SIDS, as well as at regional and international levels in SIDS and non-SIDS alike.

Thank you very much.